Additions to the Biography of Pavel Vladimirovič Otockij  
(Based on Archival Materials from Prague and Stockholm)

ANASTASIA A. FEDOTOVA, JUSSI-PEKKA HAKKARAINEN, LARS HALLBERG

St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute for the History of Science and Technology  
named after S.I. Vavilov, St. Petersburg, Russia;  
f.anastasia.spb@gmail.com

National Library of Finland, Helsinki, Finland;  
jussi-pekka.hakkarainen@helsinki.fi

National Archives of Sweden, Stockholm, Sweden;  
lars.hallberg@riksarkivet.se

Sources from the archives in Prague and Stockholm raise some previously unknown facts regarding the  
life and activities of the eminent Russian soil scientist and hydrologist Pavel Otockij in 1920-40s, who emi-  
grated from Russia in 1917. For the first time, the place and time of his death can be verified: Stockholm,  
28th of May 1954.

Keywords: Pavel Otockij, soil science, hydrology, Stockholm, Prague, scholars in exile.

Pavel Vladimirovič Otockij (born 12 / 24.01.1866), a soil scientist and hydrologist, was  
a devoted disciple of Vasily Dokučаev and a talented researcher. He is well-known for writ-  
ing the most interesting and important works on the effect of forests on groundwater in the  
early 20th century1, as the founder and director of the Soil Science Museum in St. Petersburg2,  
as the founder, long time editor, and publisher (1899—1916) of the journal  
Počvovedenie (Soil Science)3, as well as co-organizing Dokučaev’s Soil Committee and serving as its vice-chair  
(1912—1917)4. Despite the fact that Otockij played such a significant role in the development  
and institutionalization of soil science in Russia his fate is little known: he went abroad in 1917  
ever to return to his motherland5.

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1 Отоцкий, 1905. Moscow soil scientist and bibliographer of Russian soil science, Arseny Yarilov,  
described the book as following: “This research destroyed the centuries-old legend about the beneficial hydrologi-  
cal role of forests. Later, similar studies that used the Ototsky’s method have been made in various other countries:  
in Germany (by prof. E. Ebermayer), in France (by prof. E. Henry), in India (by Pearson), in Sweden (by prof. H. Hes-  
selmann), in Romania (by prof. G. Murgoci), etc. All of them confirmed the Otockij’s results» (Ярилов 1922, с. 61).

2 The first museum devoted to soil science in the world. It was created on the basis of Dokučaev’s collections  
and the collections of the Free Economical Society in 1902. Otockij was its head (without salary) up until 1912.

3 The first journal in soil science in the world. It was published until 1917 as a truly international  
journal, with an international editorial board, and with translations of Russian papers into one of the main  
scientific European languages.

4 See: Отоцкий, 1905; Колчинский, Федотова, 2011. Furthermore, since 1910 Otockij was the  
chairman of the Hydrological Commission of the Russian Geographical Society. Together with a hydrologist  
Andrey Stopnevich (1879—1919) he published the journal of the Commission Гидрологический  

5 Otockij was sent to Sweden by the Russian Provisional Government and by the Academy of Sciences  
to collect cartographic material on the geological formations of Scandinavia for the new edition of the soil  
map of Russia, to explore the so called Nordensheld wells and to make a contract for printing of the journal
In the beginning of his exile, like many emigrants, he had the opportunity to communicate and liaise with his colleagues in Russia. In August 1918, Otockij was elected a corresponding member of the Agricultural Scientific committee of the People’s Commissariat of Agriculture. In the 1920s, he published some of his studies in Soviet journals, but during the next decade these connections ceased. The soil science journals and biographical dictionaries of the Soviet period did not give any information about his life after 1917 and even the place and the year of his death were not known.

Some information about the life and the academic activities of Pavel Otockij after his emigration, as well as his contacts with Russian colleagues in the 1920s, was recently published (Матинян, Колодка, 2013). We have found some additional material from the archives in Prague and Stockholm that make his biography more complete.

Počvovedenie (Soil Science) in Sweden. But Počvovedenie was restored only in 1924 in Moscow, due to the activity of Arseny Yarilov, who became its new editor. The journal became completely Russian, the work of the international editorial board has not been renewed.

Центральный государственный архив научно-технической документации Санкт-Петербурга (Central State Archive of Scientific and Technical Documentation in St. Petersburg). Fond. 179. Opis. 1-1. № 34. P. 1–3. The Agricultural Scientific committee was a predecessor of the All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences (VASKhNIL).

See for example: Отоцкий, 1924.
We started our research in the former Czechoslovakia, where Otockij lectured at the Free University in Prague. It had been speculated that his death occurred in Prague in 1931, 1933, or during the years of the Second World War. However, the information found in the archives of the Czechoslovak police turned out to be a gold mine and forced us to follow his movements to Stockholm. Information from the Swedish State Migration Commission (Statens Utlänningskommission, The National Archives, Sweden)\(^8\) made the picture complete.

Pavel Otockij (Paul Ototzky in Swedish documents) lived in Stockholm with his family from 1917 to 1920. Their daughter, Iréne (Dolly) Paulowna Ototzky, was born on December 12, 1918. It is noteworthy that Iréne stayed in Sweden when the rest of the family left the country in 1920\(^10\). According to the documents from the Archive of the Russian Academy

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\(^9\) Riksarkivet. State Aliens Commission (Statens Utlänningskommission, kanslibyrån volume F 1 B:1856; D 1 A:69.

of Sciences, the Otockij’s financial condition in Sweden was far from favourable and this might explain why they left their small daughter\textsuperscript{11}.

Based on the documentation of the Czechoslovak police, Pavel Otockij arrived in Czechoslovakia on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of March, 1922 and, according to the information, he had spent time in Sweden and Germany after his emigration from Russia.

In Prague Otockij lectured on the natural sciences at the Free University in Prague, mainly to Russian emigrant students. According to Otockij’s own description (passport application, filed in 1946), he was invited to Czechoslovakia by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1926, he finalized the second volume of his monograph on ground waters and the book was published in the Czech language (Otockij, 1926).

Pavel Otockij visited Sweden and his younger daughter at least in 1921, 1923, and 1931. At least once he visited Iréne with his older daughter, Elena (born 6 December, 1906). In addition to the journeys to Sweden, Otockij often travelled to Brussels, Belgium in the 1920s where his wife lived until her death in 1929.

Otockij’s visa to Sweden was denied at least once. This took place in September 1944, but after the war he travelled to Stockholm again. In 1946 he received a one-year visa to Sweden and lived there between December 18, 1946 and December 14, 1947, when he returned to Czechoslovakia. In documents filed for his visa in 1946 he indicated that he was a widower, a retired professor, that he was preparing a third volume on ground waters, and that he wanted to study the Nordenskiöld’s wells in Sweden.

On July 29, 1949, Otockij arrived in Sweden for the last time. It is indicated in the documents of the Czechoslovak police that he went to live at his daughter’s (Iréne Nordenskjöld) house. He died in Stockholm on May 28, 1954.

Acknowledgements

We express our deep gratitude to Dr. Elena Rusakova for providing us with Otockij’s photos and Eric Michael Johnson for his considerable help in polishing our English in this paper.

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Отоцкий П.В. О Норденшильдовских колодцах // Почвоведение. 1924. № 1–2. С. 147–149.


\textsuperscript{11} St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Fond 80. Opis. 1. № 94, 96. See also: Матинян, Колодка, 2013.
К биографии Павла Владимировича Отцокого
(по материалам архивов Праги и Стокгольма)

АНАСТАСИЯ ФЕДОТОВА, ЮССИ-ПЕККА ХАКАРАЙНЕН, ЛАРС ХАЛЬБЕРГ

Санкт-Петербургский филиал Института истории естествознания и техники
им. С.И. Вавилова РАН, Санкт-Петербург, Россия;
f.anastasia.spb@gmail.com

Национальная библиотека Финляндия, Хельсинки Финляндия;
jussipekka.hakkarainen@gmail.com

Государственный архив Швеции, Стокгольм, Швеция;
lars.hallberg@riksarkivet.se

Po материалам архивов Праги и Стокгольма приведены ранее неизвестные сведения о жизни
в 1920—40-х гг. крупного почвоведа и гидролога П.В. Отцокого, в 1917 г. эмигрировавшего
из России. Впервые приводится документально обоснованные дата и место его смерти: Сток-
гольм, 28 мая 1954 г.

Ключевые слова: П.В. Отцокий, Стокгольм, Прага, почвоведение, гидрология, ученые в эмиграции.